

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 1185

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LY, US
SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN SIKES' CONVERSATION WITH THE HEAD OF THE
FOREIGN LIAISON BUREAU OF THE LIBYAN GENERAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS

REF: TRIPOLI 1183

1. ON AUG 25, CONGRESSMAN SIKES AND I CALLED ON AHMED SHAHATI, HEAD OF THE FOREIGN LIAISON BUREAU OF THE GENERAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS. ALI HOUDERI, HEAD OF THE BUREAU'S AMERICAN SECTION, WAS ALSO PRESENT. IN AN HOUR-LONG CONVERSATION, SHAHATI WAS NOT AT FIRST VERY FORTHCOMING, BUT AS THE EXCHANGE PROGRESSED HE BECAME ANIMATED AND CONCLUDED BY INVITING CONGRESSMAN SIKES TO HAVE DINNER WITH HIM THAT EVENING. (SIKES LATER DECLINED BECAUSE HIS SCHEDULE REQUIRED HIM TO LEAVE TRIPOLI IN THE EARLY EVENING.) SHAHATI SAID HE WAS SORRY THAT COL. QADHAFI WAS OUT OF TOWN AND COULD NOT RECEIVE THE CONGRESSMAN.

2. SHAHATI EXPLAINED THAT THE FOREIGN LIAISON BUREAU
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WAS SET UP TO PROVIDE DIRECT LINKS BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF LIBYA AND THOSE OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES. HE SAID HE HAD VISITED THE U.S. SEVERAL TIMES AND HAD RECEIVED DELEGATIONS IN TRIPOLI. HE HOPED THAT THE EXCHANGE COULD BE ENLARGED.

3. CONGRESSMAN SIKES EXPLAINED THAT HIS VISIT WAS TO

ACQUAINT HIMSELF BETTER WITH LIBYA AND ALSO TO TAKE PART IN SUCH A PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXCHANGE. SHAHATI REPLIED THAT LIBYA WAS ALSO INTERESTED IN IMPROVING RELATIONS ON A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT LEVEL. LIBYANS COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE U.S. OPPOSED SUCH AN IMPROVEMENT, AS DEMONSTRATED BY ITS REFUSAL TO AGREE TO AN EXCHANGE OF REPRESENTATIVES AT THE AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL. THIS, HE SAID, SEEMED VERY STRANGE SINCE VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER STATES HAD AMBASSADORS IN WASHINGTON AND WERE REPRESENTED BY AMBASSADORS IN TRIPOLI.

4. CONGRESSMAN SIKES REPLIED THAT THERE WERE MANY IN THE U.S. WHO WISHED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH LIBYA. HE THOUGHT THAT VISITS SUCH AS HIS COULD CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND LEAD TO GREATER COOPERATION IN BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FIELDS.

5. SHAHATI OBSERVED THAT THE ARABS HAD IN THE PAST FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. BECAUSE OF THE LATTER'S UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. HE THOUGHT THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS WERE ALSO SOMETIMES DISAPPOINTED BY THE LACK OF U.S. SUPPORT.

6. SHAHATI TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN RAISING QUESTION OF
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HIJACKINGS AND TERRORISM, STATING THE STANDARD POSITION THAT LIBYA OPPOSES TERRORISM AND IN THE PAST ONLY RECEIVED HIJACKED PLANES AT THE REQUEST OF OTHER GOVTS FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS. HE SAID IT WAS LIBYAN POLICY NOT TO RECEIVE HIJACKED PLANES, AS SHOWN BY LIBYA'S ADHERENCE TO ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS. LIBYANS, THEREFORE, COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE U.S. WAS EMBARGOING THE SALE OF TRUCKS AND AIRPLANES TO LIBYA. THE U.S. HAD BEEN THE TRADITIONAL SUPPLIER, AND A TRADE RELATIONSHIP WAS ADVANTAGEOUS TO BOTH COUNTRIES.

7. CONGRESSMAN SIKES ASKED WHAT COULD BE DONE TO HELP NARROW THE GAP BETWEEN AMERICA'S HEAVY IMPORT OF LIBYAN PETROLEUM AND THE RELATIVELY SMALL VOLUME OF LIBYAN IMPORTS FROM THE U.S. SHAHATI REPLIED THAT TRADE HAD A WAY OF FOLLOWING POLITICS. IF LIBYA HAD AN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, SUCH A PERSON WOULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN GENERATING ADDITIONAL TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE BELIEVED THAT IF THE ATMOSPHERE IMPROVED, MUCH COULD BE DONE TO ENLARGE THE VOLUME OF LIBYAN PURCHASES FROM THE U.S.

8. THE CONVERSATION ENDED WITH MUTUAL EXPRESSIONS OF
A DESIRE TO ENLARGE THE US-LIBYAN DIALOGUE AND IMPROVE
RELATIONS.
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